

# Makonde language

**Makonde**, or **Kimakonde**, is the language spoken by the Makonde, an ethnic group in southeast Tanzania and northern Mozambique. Makonde is a central Bantu language closely related to Yao. The Matembwe and Mabiha (Maviha) dialects are divergent, and may not be Makonde (Nurse 2003).

A mosquito-borne viral fever first identified on the Makonde Plateau is named 'Chikungunya', which is derived from the Makonde root verb *kungunyala* (meaning "that which bends up", "to become contorted," or "to walk bent over").<sup>[6]</sup> The derivation of the term is generally falsely attributed to Swahili.<sup>[7]</sup>

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## Phonology

The following are the consonants and vowels of the Makonde language<sup>[8]</sup>:

### Consonants

| Makonde                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chi(ni)makonde         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Native to</b>       | Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Kenya                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>       | Makonde, Ndonde Hamba                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Native speakers</b> | 1.4 million (2006) <sup>[2]</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Language family</b> | <div>Niger–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Atlantic–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Volta-Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Benue–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Southern Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rufiji–Ruvuma<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ruvuma<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Makonde languages<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Makonde</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div> |
| <b>Dialects</b>        | Matembwe–Machinga<br>Mabiha<br>Ndonde Hamba (Mawanda)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Writing system</b>  | Latin                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Language codes         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>ISO 639-3</b>       | Variously: <div>kde – Makonde, Mabiha<br/>mvw – Machinga<br/>njd – Ndonde Hamba<sup>[1]</sup></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Glottolog</b>       | mako1251 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mako1251</span> ) Makonde <sup>[3]</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

mach1265 (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mach1265>) Machinga<sup>[4]</sup>

**Guthrie code** P.23, 24, 25<sup>[5]</sup>

|                    |           | <u>Labial</u>  | <u>Alveolar</u> | <u>Palatal</u> | <u>Velar</u>   | <u>Glottal</u> |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Plosive</b>     | voiceless | p              | t               |                | k              |                |
|                    | voiced    | b              | d               |                | g              |                |
|                    | prenasal  | <sup>m</sup> b | <sup>n</sup> d  | <sup>ɲ</sup> ɟ | <sup>ŋ</sup> g |                |
| <b>Affricate</b>   |           |                |                 | tʃ             |                |                |
| <b>Fricative</b>   |           |                | s               |                |                | h              |
| <b>Nasal</b>       |           | m              | n               | ɲ              | ŋ              |                |
| <b>Lateral</b>     |           |                | l               |                |                |                |
| <b>Approximant</b> |           | ʋ              |                 | j              | w              |                |

## Vowels

|             | <u>Front</u> | <u>Back</u> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>High</b> | i            | u           |
| <b>Mid</b>  | e            | o           |
| <b>Low</b>  | a            |             |

There also tends to be a rising final vowel sound /v́/ within vowel combinations.

## References

- Hammarström (2015) Ethnologue 16/17/18th editions: a comprehensive review: online appendices
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Machinga (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/mvw/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
Ndonde Hamba (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/njd/>)[1] at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
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8. Kraal, Pieter J. (2005). *A Grammar of Makonde (Chinnima, Tanzania)* (<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/4271>). pp. 16–32.

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